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Message Text

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PAGE 01 BRUSSE 14064 181604Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----------073969 181607Z /45
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 14064

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MPOL, NATO, BE, GW
SUBJECT: WARTIME COLLOCATION OF HQ USEUCOM AT SHAPE

REF: A) STATE 177241, B) BRUSSELS 6369, C) BRUSSELS 13324

1. WE SEE NO FACTORS IN CURRENT BELGIAN POLITICAL SITUATION THAT WOULD MAKE A FAVORABLE RESPONSE ON WARTIME COLLOCATION PROPOSAL ANY MORE LIKELY NOW THAN WHEN WE WERE GIVEN VERY NEGATIVE PRESENTATION MARCH 31 BY FOREIGN MINISTRY'S NATO AFFAIRS DIRECTOR ERIK BAL ON BEHALF FOREIGN AND DEFENSE MINISTRIES (REF B), ESPECIALLY GIVEN FACT THAT BOTH FOREIGN MINISTER SIMONET AND DEFENSE MINISTER VANDEN BOEYNANTS HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY REITERATED AT HIGHEST LEVEL NEGATIVE INDICATIONS (REF A).

2. BELGIANS HAVE CONSISTENTLY LINKED COLLOCATION PROPOSAL WITH OTHER ONGOING MILITARY QUESTIONS, NOTABLY HAWK, AND STRONGLY STRESSED DANGER OF PUSHING ON TOO MANY FRONTS AT SAME TIME, E.G. SIMONET'S METAPHOR OF OVERLOADING FRAIL BOAT AND THUS SINKING IT (BAL, FOR HIS PART, HAS ADVISED ON MANY OCCASIONS AGAINST "OVERLOADING CIRCUITS").

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3. THE LACK OF BELGIAN MOVEMENT ON OTHER MILITARY ISSUES OF MAJOR CONCERN TO US WAS STRIKINGLY EVIDENT WHEN SENATOR BYRD MADE STRONG DEMARCHES ON JULY 4 TO BOTH TINDEMANS AND VANDEN BOEYNANTS ON BEHALF LTDP 3 PERCENT GOAL, CLOSING HAWK GAP, AND BELGIAN PARTICIPATION IN AWACS (REF C). WHEN QUERIED ON HAWK, FOR EXAMPLE, TINDEMANS GRAPHICALLY DESCRIBED HIS GOVERNMENT'S

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DIFFICULT POLITICAL SITUATION (ILLUSTRATED BY FACT THAT
BOTH HE AND VANDEN BOEYNANTS HAD BEEN UP ALL PREVIOUS
NIGHT TRYING TO COPE WITH DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROBLEMS),
AND SAID THERE WAS STILL HOPE FOR FAVORABLE OUTCOME
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BUT THAT "IT WILL BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT."

4. SENATOR BYRD DID NOT RAISE THE SUBJECT OF COLLOCATION
WHILE HERE, WHICH WAS UNDOUBTEDLY A RELIEF TO HIS INTER-
LOCUTORS. ALREADY HARASSED WITH SO MANY DIFFICULT
POLITICAL PROBLEMS, TINDEMANS OBVIOUSLY WOULD NOT RELISH
HAVING COLLOCATION ADDED TO HIS AGENDA, AND PARTICULARLY
THE NEED TO CLEAR ACCEPTANCE OF AN ADDITIONAL MILITARY
INSTALLATION WITH HIS "ANTI-MILITARY" SOCIALIST PARTNERS
(IN POINTING OUT THE POLITICAL PROBLEMS INVOLVED, BAL
HAS STRESSED TO US THAT WHEN SHAPE'S TRANSFER TO BELGIUM
WAS DEBATED IN PARLIAMENT IN 1966 THE GOVERNMENT COMMITTED
ITSELF TO BE VERY PRUDENT REGARDING ACCEPTING ADDITIONAL
MILITARY INSTALLATIONS).

5. GIVEN THE PRIORITY THAT WE PLACE ON HAWK AND AWACS
(REF A, PARA 6), WE FEEL THAT IT WOULD BE IMPOLITIC
TO RAISE WARTIME COLLOCATION UNTIL THOSE PROBLEMS ARE
RESOLVED ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. WHEN WE LAST DISCUSSED
COLLOCATION HERE (REF B), WE WERE FIRMLY TOLD THAT IF
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THE QUESTION WERE FORMALLY RAISED IT WOULD RISK PRODUCING
A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON OTHER PROBLEMS. WE HAVE NO
REASON TO BELIEVE THAT SITUATION IS ANY DIFFERENT NOW,
NOR THAT IT WILL CHANGE IN NEAR FUTURE, E.G. BY SEPTEMBER.

6. WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND THAT WE AWAIT FURTHER DEVELOP-
MENTS ON OTHER MILITARY MATTERS OF PRIORITY INTEREST
BEFORE MAKING ANOTHER APPROACH ON COLLOCATION. WE RE-
GRETFULLY SEE LITTLE LIKELIHOOD OF AN AFFIRMATIVE
BELGIAN RESPONSE, WHETHER IN SEPTEMBER, AT THE END OF
THE YEAR, OR EARLY NEXT YEAR.

7. ACTION REQUESTED: DEPARTMENT REQUESTED TO PASS
THIS MESSAGE TO USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM, USMISSION USNATO,
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN AND USDEL MC BRUSSELS. CHAMBERS

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